

VZCZCXRO9263

PP RUEHAG RUEHDA RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHLN RUEHLZ  
RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG  
DE RUEHVJ #1024 1300855  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 100855Z MAY 06 ZDK  
FM AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3462  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC  
RUFOAOA/USNIC SARAJEVO

UNCLAS SARAJEVO 001024

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DEPT FOR D (SMITH), P (BAME), EUR (DICARLO), EUR/SCE  
(ENGLISH, FOOKS, MITCHELL, SAINZ), G/TIP FOR DONNELLY, NSC  
FOR BRAUN, OSD FOR FLORY, USNIC FOR WEBER AND GREGORIAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: BOSNIA: TRAFFICKER GETS EIGHT YEARS

REF: SARAJEVO 477

11. On April 25, the Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) State Court handed down the second-longest sentence in the history of Bosnia's anti-trafficking statute, which allows for a maximum sentence of ten years. Mostar trafficker Nermin Cupina was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment. The judge also ordered the seizure of Cupina's apartment and payment of compensation to his victims (a total value of \$62,500). Cupina and his two co-defendants were tried separately; Igor Salcin pled guilty and was sentenced to five and a half years in February 2006, and Predrag Leventic was acquitted. This verdict represents a major victory for the State Prosecutor's office, and is a welcome sign that Bosnian courts are increasingly willing to impose substantial financial and criminal penalties in trafficking cases.

12. The details of defendant Nermin Cupina's trafficking operation, in which four underage girls were forced into prostitution, captivated the city of Mostar throughout the trial. Victims testified that Cupina and his associates videotaped them having sex with clients, then threatened to send the videos to their families if they did not cooperate. Two of the girls were from BiH, and two were from Serbia-Montenegro. Cupina and his associates used threats and violence to force the girls to comply, and also provided them with illegal drugs. Judge Salem Miso, who chaired the three-judge panel that decided the case, praised the victims for their courage in testifying, noting that the victims' testimony was critical in making the case against Cupina. Judge Miso also advised the victims to file a civil suit against Cupina and his co-defendants. Since Cupina was previously sentenced to four years' imprisonment for car theft and racketeering in an unrelated case, he will serve a combined sentence of eleven years and six months.

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